

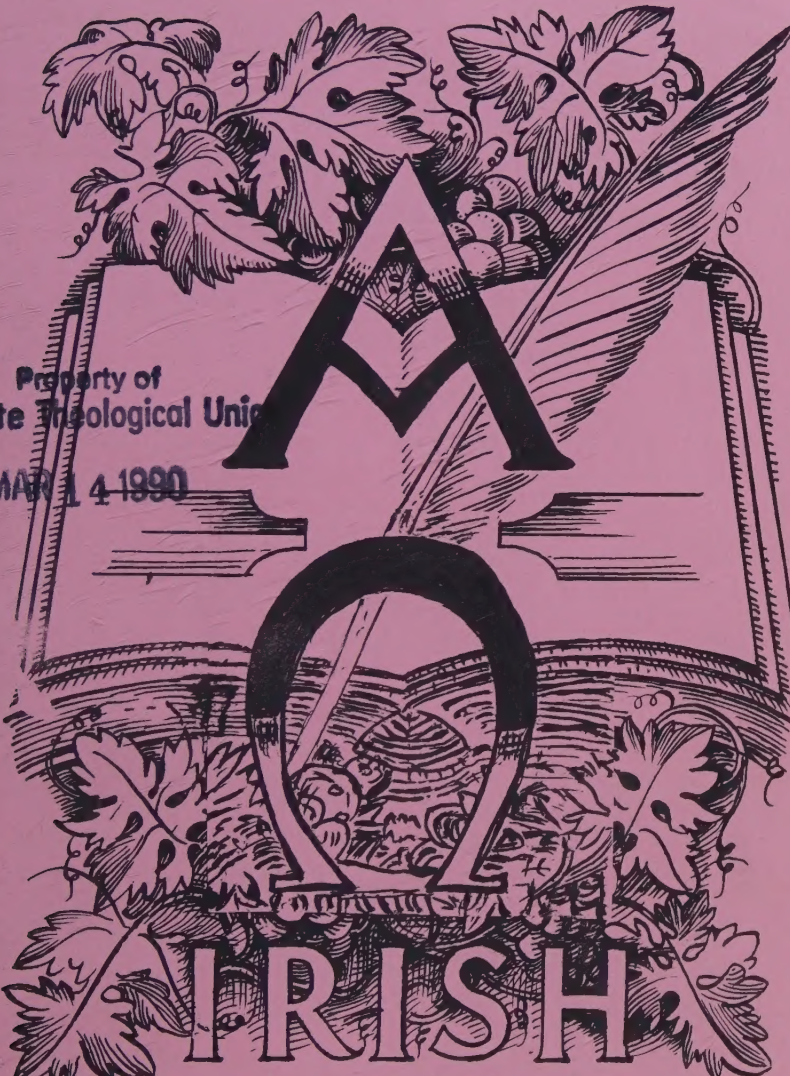
IBS

Vol. 12

January 1990

Property of  
Graduate Theological Union

MAR 14 1990



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Institutions £10.00 Sterling or \$18.00 US

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Biblical Studies" and addressed to the Editor.

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## Paul's Missionary Practice and Policy in Romans

W.S.Campbell

### Introduction

Paul was the doyen of missionary theologians in the early days of the church. Not only did he spend his life in urgent compulsive evangelisation but he also wrote and argued for a theology of Gentile mission that necessitated a revised understanding of the church's outreach and development.

Romans has traditionally and, in our opinion, wrongly been regarded as a summary of Paul's theology. This designation would have more substance were the letter regarded as a summary of Paul's theology of mission which in fact can be seen to occupy a substantial part of the letter when chapters 9-11 are included in the discussion. (1)

### 1 The Contextual Nature of Paul's Statements in his Letters

It has become increasingly clear to New Testament scholars in recent years that Paul did not set out to develop in his letters a systematic theology. We can no longer therefore legitimately use his statements as if they were abstract and timeless theology. E P Sanders concluded from his study of Paul and the law that though 'a priori' one would expect Paul to have had a clear position on the law, in fact because Paul's statements depend on the question asked or the problem posed, he does appear to have said different things on differing occasions. This may be because "Paul did not abstract his statements about the law from the context in which they were made, nor did he consider them in their relationship to one another apart from the questions they were intended to answer". (2) There is general agreement, however, that although Paul's statements on any topic are contingent upon the circumstances he addresses, nevertheless coherence as well as contingency is the hallmark of his thought. (3) The relevance of this for our immediate enquiry is that we must interpret

Paul's statements about mission in Romans in the light of the context out of which the letter originated and to which it was addressed.

Although we cannot discuss in any detail here the reason why Paul wrote the letter to the Romans, one thing is clear. There is some factor whether in Paul's situation, or, as seems more probable in our opinion, in the situation of the Roman Christians which necessitated a consideration of the Jewish people and their response to the gospel. This explains the unique discussion of Israel in chapters 9-11 of the letter. (4) A curious but related factor is that no one would guess from Paul's statements concerning his mission plans in chapter 1 that he is not coming immediately to Rome, but is in fact on his way to Jerusalem instead. He eventually gets round to mentioning this in chapter 15. But why the silence in chapter 1? Is this due to Paul's embarrassment about his relations with the 'Urgemeinde' in Jerusalem, or perhaps about the collection gathered from the Gentile churches for the poor saints in Jerusalem? It may even be that Paul is aware that he is suspected of being too patriotic because of his own ethnic origin in Judaism?

It seems to us that any balanced approach to the reason why Paul wrote the letter must find some basis both in the situation at Rome such as divisions within the Christian community there, and also some factor in the mission or situation of Paul himself that is somehow intimately connected with, or influenced by, the situation of the Roman Christians. Only in this way can we avoid seeing the letter as being completely determined by Paul's own needs and problems as he heads for Jerusalem, or as reflecting only the situation at Rome without any relation to the wider issues of Paul's mission policy. It will suffice at this stage simply to note that there is evidence in chapters 14-15 of divisions between "the weak" and "the strong" which may reflect divisions between Jewish and Gentile Christians. There is evidence also of Gentile arrogance over against Jews in chapter 11:13f and there is some indication that



Paul in chapter 4 has in mind to demonstrate that Jewish, proselyte and Gentile Christians share a common ancestry in their "father Abraham".

Whatever the precise impetus that led to the letter being written, we are thankful for it since it has provided the fullest discussion in the New Testament of the purpose of God for both Jew and Gentile: a discussion moreover which consciously faces the realities of Jew-Gentile differences whether in cultural heritage or in relations within the churches. It is likely in view of statements by Paul, such as that he has long intended to visit the Romans and that their faith is spoken of throughout the world, that there had been Christians in Rome for a decade or more when Paul wrote his letter in 57-58 AD. According to chapter 16 which we take to be part of the original letter, there may have been at least five different house churches and there may have been a not inconsiderable number of Christians since Paul lists no less than twenty-five with whom he is acquainted. One of these references is to a couple, probably husband and wife, described as noteworthy apostles who were in Christ before Paul (16:17). (5) The fact that Paul addresses his letter "to all God's beloved in Rome" (1:7) may indicate that there were different groups within the Roman Christian community who did not fully accept each other as Christians and chapters 14-15 may be further evidence for this; we note especially Paul's final admonition to "accept one another as Christ also accepted us" (15:7). It is possible that the differences, if such there were, within Roman Christianity, arose not simply from cultural differences but from "ecclesiastical" differences, ie the Roman Christians may have migrated to Rome from other areas where they may have been evangelised by different Christian missionaries - hence their differing interpretation of the Christian message. We must return to this in more detail later.

## II Paul's Mission Plans in Relation to Rome

Paul understands himself to be called in the manner of

the prophets of old to be an apostle (Rom 1:1, cf. also Gal 1:15). More precisely, he regards himself as "apostle to the Gentiles" (Rom 11:13), called by God and given grace "to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles" (15:16-17). In liturgical terms Paul conceives of his ministry as a priestly service whereby he offers up the Gentiles to God as "an acceptable sacrifice, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (15:16).

Paul appears to have regarded Jerusalem as both the point of origin of his mission and also the centre of the church. However much he may be aware of the political significance of Rome, it comes behind Jerusalem in religious significance. By 57 AD, Paul has already pursued his ministry throughout the regions bordering the Mediterranean - from Jerusalem to the western shores of Greece. His pattern was to set up congregations in the main provincial centres and then move on, leaving them to evangelise their own region. But Paul would still care for them pastorally or write or visit as circumstances permitted because they are for him evidence of the validity of his own ministry and apostleship - so that effectively his own Christian achievements are bound up with theirs.

To evangelise in Paul's understanding meant not only the initial preaching of the gospel but also the support and upbuilding of his converts who themselves would then continue the proclamation which Paul had initiated. This policy is important in helping to resolve what some regard as a clear contradiction in Paul's statements between chapters 1 and 15 of Romans. From Greece, Paul plans to move further west to Rome and then to the farthest borders of the west - to Spain. The reason why he heads for Rome and Spain at this time is because he has now no more room for evangelising in the East (15:23). This announcement is preceded in 15:19-20 by Paul's statement that he has "fully preached the gospel of Christ... not where Christ was already named" - lest he build on another man's foundation. The policy Paul follows here is supported by a scriptural citation from Isaiah 52:15, a passage which refers to "many nations".



As further explanation for his plans to visit Rome, Paul claims that for many years "he has had a great desire to visit them" (15:23). He immediately hastens to add that his main purpose is to make his journey into Spain and it would appear that what he really wants from the Romans is missionary support for his evangelistic work in Spain. He hopes to be "sent on his way" by them. He uses the term "propemphthenai", probably a technical term for providing such necessary missionary support as offering a place to stay, assistance with travel and also possibly acting as a link between the new mission station and the sending churches. (6)

So much for chapter 15, but already in chapter 1, Paul had spoken of being ready "to evangelise" in Rome also (1:15). In v 11 he had spoken of imparting some spiritual gift to the Romans and then, as if he were afraid of sounding too presumptuous, goes on to talk of a mutual strengthening of faith between them (v 12). Again in v 13 he speaks of "gaining some fruit among the Romans, as amongst other Gentiles". The latter statement implies what we already know to be true - that Paul has not as yet visited or preached in Rome. But how are we to reconcile the use of the same verb "to evangelise" in 1:15 and 15:20, coming as the latter does, immediately after Paul's stated intention of avoiding duplication or conflict by building on another man's foundation?

The explanation must be, as we have suggested, that Paul understands evangelisation to apply also to the upbuilding of Christians in the gospel. Moreover the explanation for moving to Rome is that Paul has no more room in the East - therefore he cannot now be faithful to his former policy - only in Spain can he continue his pioneer work. To get there he needs the help of the Roman Christians and to ensure that help he needs an undivided Christian community. His evangelising there has this limited sense of ensuring proper support for future mission in Spain. (7)



It is probable for various reasons that no particular apostle had been instrumental in founding the Christian congregations at Rome. Paul seems to have had many friends there and probably the best explanation is that he did not feel entirely responsible for the Roman Christians because he had not founded that church, and also because there were Christians there from other branches of the Christian mission - possibly converted through the Jerusalem church. But Paul, as God's agent in winning some of these Christians to Christ and as apostle to the Gentiles generally, has the right and obligation, not only to pray for them (1:9) but also to visit Rome to encourage and strengthen his own Gentile converts. Hence Paul's summing up of the content of his letter in 15:15 as reminding them of that which he expects them already to know.

He formally states, however, that the gospel obligates him to all men, all races and all cultures. He is indebted to the Greek and the barbarian not only because he has learnt from both Judaism and Hellenism, but because in the gospel he is obligated to witness to all men since the gospel itself concerns all, whether Jew or Greek, barbarian, bond or free etc.

In concluding this section we note the possibility that there may have been differing groups of Christians in Rome who originated from differing branches of the Christian mission. We have already drawn attention to Paul's caution in addressing the Romans. If some of these Christians were Jewish converts of the Jerusalem church which, according to Gaston, did not believe in evangelising Gentiles, (8) then perhaps the origin of the phrase "to the Jew first" might be attributed to this group. It would be important for Paul as he heads for Jerusalem with the collection not to cause misunderstanding there by interfering in a Christian community which had its earliest roots in Jerusalem. If the phrase "There is no distinction" - attributable possibly also to Paul himself, did originate from the Christians in Antioch, then it could be that Paul in Romans is addressing a situation where competing Christian groups

antagonise each other with slogans of their respective places of origin or allegiance, emphasising their differences rather than their common belonging to Christ. Whatever their situation, Paul's concern is that their quarrels or divisions should not become a hindrance to the success of the gospel - either in his forthcoming visit to Jerusalem or in his intended evangelisation of Spain. Hence his serious concern expressed in his call for them to join together in prayer for him in both these projects (15:30f).

### III Paul's Gospel

#### (a) God's Act in Christ as the Foundation of Paul's Missionary Proclamation.

In important statements in the first chapter of Romans Paul declares he is not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God into salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. According to Paul, in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed through faith. For Paul righteousness describes a relationship - the covenant relationship between God and his people. To be "just" or "righteous" is to uphold the covenant, to act in accordance with it; to be "unrighteous" is to act in such a way that the covenant is broken. The fact that God can always be relied upon to keep His part of the covenant means that He can also be described as faithful (Rom 3:5) and the good news of the gospel for Paul consists in the fact that God has acted in Christ to uphold His covenant with humanity despite the faithlessness of His people Israel in refusing his gospel. In 3:21-30 Paul demonstrates that God's act in Christ is both the sign of God's righteousness and the means of righteousness for those who have faith (3:25-26). (9)

Although God's act in Christ is consistent with what is already known of God's faithfulness in the Old Testament, it is nevertheless so qualitatively new in its effects and what it offers that Paul can contrast this new aeon with all that has gone before. In Rom 7 in



particular, Paul shows how prior to Christ the law was weakened through the power of sin and that only through His deliverance and with the aid of the power of the Spirit (Rom 8) may men be restored to fellowship with God. So Paul emphasises the newness of the gospel. He begins in 3:21 "But now the righteousness of God is manifested..." and in 8:1 he says "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus". In the Christ event God offers as a gift to humanity a restored relationship with Himself. With the gift goes also the demand to accept the Lordship of the Creator who is now in this way acting to restore His control over His rebellious creation. (10) It is God's purpose not only to save human beings, but the whole creation looks for its eventual redemption when the full adoption of God's sons is realised into the full redemption of their bodies (8:19f).

Along with the cosmic aspects of Paul's gospel goes his stress on the gospel as universal. All men both Jew and Greek are frequently referred to in Romans and Paul is at pains to emphasise that what God has done in Christ applies equally to everyone. Since God is One, there can be only one way of salvation and the centrality of faith in the new aeon means that anyone is able to enter the kingdom. Since in this respect there is no distinction (3:22) then Jews and Gentiles are equally able to enter the kingdom and conversely neither are exempt from this challenge. The reason for Paul's heavy stress upon faith is precisely to emphasise the universality of the gospel which the entrance requirement of faith ensures. The possession of the law, though itself a privilege for God's people, had placed racial limits on entry to the covenant people (3:30). But what the law does not do - "apply equally to all" - righteousness by faith does. (11) Yet this righteousness by faith is not to be seen in total discontinuity from the law or from Judaism. The presupposition of faith in Paul is the grace of God and it is under this theme that we will study another aspect of his gospel.

(b) Paul's Gospel as the Fulfillment of the Hope of Israel

Paul's ministry to the Gentiles is itself the result of God's grace (15:15,12:3). His gospel presupposes the elective purpose of God for Israel which he strikingly describes (with reference to the remnant) as "the election of grace". The theme of grace denotes continuity and consistency between God's revelation of Himself in the past and in the present. Grace is probably what Abraham found when, according to the Genesis narrative, God called him and made him the first of the faithful. As such he is the prototype of all men of faith, including Christians. He is "the father of us all" (Rom 4:16). In his choice of Abraham, Paul is not simply making an arbitrary selection to obtain a representative believer. Abraham stands at the beginning of God's ways with Israel and demonstrates, at the outset of the giving of God's promise to bless the world in and through him (Abraham) and his descendants, that the promise originated in grace. (12) Its fulfillment to be firm (bebaian) must needs also be based on grace (4:16). The blessing promised to Abraham who was to be "the father of many nations" (4:17), Paul believes to have arrived in Christ, whom he describes as having become "a servant to the circumcision so as to confirm (eis to bebaiosai) the promise of the fathers and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy" (15:8-9).

In chapters 5-6 Paul sees the Christ event in terms of God's grace. By him - the Lord Jesus Christ - we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand (5:2). Paul contrasts the reign of grace with the reign of sin. The grace of God and the gift of grace through Jesus Christ far exceed the reign of sin in Adam. "Where sin abounded, grace superabounded" (5:20), so that those who are united with Christ cannot possibly continue in sin (6:1).

Thus Romans, more than any other letter of Paul, demonstrates continuity in the divine initiative in grace. (13) The gifts and the call of God are irrev-



ocable (11:29) and therefore Paul can speak of the privileges of Israel as a present, and not as a past, reality (9:4-5).

But this does not mean that Israel may presume and interpret the experience of divine election as a state of "electedness". Paul sees the failure of Jews to respond to the gospel partly in terms of their having an exclusive understanding of election. Gaston and Sanders correctly interpret 9:30f as indicating that the Jews have sought a righteousness of their own, ie a righteousness available to Jews alone. (14) The result is that they have failed to see in Christ the goal of the law and Paul is full of sorrow as he realises how few of his fellow Jews have responded to the gospel.

But he does not, because of this, deny them a future in God's purposes. He does not think in terms of their displacement by Gentiles, but rather of Gentiles being brought in to share the richness of the olive tree (11:17). Here, as 11:16 indicates, Paul is thinking in terms of corporate wholes rather than individuals "If the first fruit is holy, so is the whole lump...".

It is through his understanding of the term "Israel" that Paul is able to hold together what many of his interpreters have found contradictory, ie the actual state of Israel, by and large not responding favourably to the gospel - and the possession of the name Israel, indicating participation in the divine purpose of election. Israel for Paul is a fluid rather than a fixed entity.(15)

In his overview of Israel's history in chapter 9, he illustrates how God throughout this history has exercised His freedom amongst the Israelites, to choose people for His overall purposes of mercy. The conclusion of Paul's argument in Rom 9 and Rom 11 is that God remains free to retain the Jews within His purposes, even if they are now disobedient to the gospel, and that He is also free to bring in the Gentiles to share in their inheritance.

Thus Paul knows nothing of any doctrine which suggests that since the coming of Christ, the people of Israel have been reduced to the same level as other Gentiles as if election were a thing of the past. Rather what Paul offers is the opportunity for Gentiles to share in the inheritance of Israel. (16) He does not suggest a diminishing of Israel's privileges but rather an increase in the privileges of Gentiles. This is why at the end of his letter to Rome, he can write of "the root of Jesse in whom the Gentiles shall hope" (15:12). The same emphasis is found in Eph 2:18-20 "Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets."

Paul sees it as his task to proclaim the gospel in the period between the resurrection and the parousia seeking by means of his mission to bridge the great gap between Israel's actual state and her divine destiny.

#### **IV Paul's Revision of Priorities in the Christian Mission in View of the Contemporary Outcome of the Gospel Proclamation**

Whatever the precise origin of the phrase "to the Jew first", its inclusion in Rom 1:16 in association with its corollary "and also to the Greek" indicates that there was still some discussion as to whether it was right to concentrate the Christian mission primarily on Jews, whether it should now extend to Gentiles also, or perhaps - in the short term - should aim at Gentiles only. Lloyd Gaston has recently highlighted the great theological differences between Paul and Jerusalem despite the fact of their mutual recognition. "The Jerusalem church is characterised by circumcision, by Torah, and by a mission restricted to Israel." (17) Raymond Brown has similarly outlined the diversity that existed within the early Christian mission, identifying four main types of Jewish-Gentile Christianity each of which conducted their own mission work and made their



own converts. (18) One main function of Roms 9-11 is to present an "apologia" on behalf of Paul's own understanding of the relation between his mission work and the eventual salvation of Israel. (19) It is quite clear though Paul differs from earlier missionaries in no longer holding that Israel must be restored prior to the coming in of the Gentiles, this revision of priorities does not signify complete and utter despair over Israel. What we wish to consider briefly is the possible factors that led Paul to this particular missionary outlook and strategy.

It would appear that throughout his career as apostle Paul held, in common with the Jerusalem church, a fundamental belief that God would save Israel. Where they differed was on the interpretation of the means by which this end would be achieved. It follows from this that Paul must have been responsible for introducing a different view involving a different strategy from the original disciples. How did Paul arrive at this view? Did Paul's new understanding coincide with his conversion call? Alternatively did he only gradually come to realise that God had called him to be apostle to the Gentiles? This would account for the fact that we know rather little about Paul's earlier missionary work and also why the admission of Gentiles to the church became a problem only at a later date. Did Paul first of all concentrate his efforts on winning Jews and only as a result of his failure to win Jews did he then turn to the Gentiles? (20) Rom 11 suggests a very close connection between the failure of the Jews to respond to the Christian message and the origin of a mission to the Gentiles. "Through their failure salvation has come to the Gentiles." "If their trespass means riches for the world (11:11-12); if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world (11:11-15) you have received mercy because of their disobedience." (11:30)

Paul seems to be indicating a clear causal connection between the failure of the mission to Jews and the inception of a mission to Gentiles. This might, of course, be only a general reference, referring to the

rejection of Jesus by the leaders of the Jewish people. But in Romans it appears more immediate than this. There we get the impression that God almost had to remove some (Jewish) branches of the tree in order to make room for the unnatural inclusion of Gentile branches. (21) This would suggest that it was Paul's own reflection upon the fact of the failure of the Jews to respond that has led him to preach to the Gentiles. He concludes that God has hardened the hearts of the Jews temporarily with the explicit intention of saving the Gentiles first. It was doubtless the fact that some Gentiles demonstrated the charismatic effects of the Spirit in their lives, taken along with the negative response of the Jews, that led Paul in a secondary theological reflection on this primary historical and social reality to conclude that it was through the Gentiles God would save Israel. (22) What is not clear is the length of time that may have elapsed between Paul's conversion call and his full realization of the required sequence of events as described in Rom 11. At the height of his career did he regard himself as a missionary only to the Gentiles or does he now evangelise also the Jews of the Diaspora as Luke in Acts suggests?

According to Gal 2:7-9 the division of labour agreed at the Council of Jerusalem was ethnographic rather than geographic - Paul is to go to the uncircumcised, Peter to the circumcised. E P Sanders therefore finds it unlikely that 1 Cor 9:19-23 can be taken literally. When Paul's statement in Rom 15:19, where he depicts himself as working in a circle from Jerusalem to Illyricum, is put alongside 1 Cor 9:19-23, it implies that Paul is apostle to everyone in the Mediterranean area, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. Sanders does not deny that Paul sometimes lived as a Jew but he cannot conceive of Paul establishing two different churches in one area - observing the law in one and not in the other. Sander's solution to what he regards as a difficult question is that Peter, Paul and the others in their urgent desire to carry out their respective missions, made no special provision for Diaspora

## Jews. (23)

The evidence of Acts and of Rom 11:14 is that Paul did hope to win some Jews. Munck cites Jülicher's criticism of Paul's claim to have fully preached the gospel in the east as "gross exaggeration"; Munck himself has a better understanding of Paul. He equates "the offering (he prosphora) of the Gentiles" by Paul as their priest in Rom 15:16 with the "fulness (to plērōma) of the Gentiles" of 11:25 and the obedience of the Gentiles of 15:18. It is obvious that Paul has not preached the gospel to every individual in these areas mentioned. But Paul is able to claim he has finished his work because, as already noted, he thinks representatively, ie in terms of nations - Galatians, Achaians, Macedonians etc. (24) Munck also believes that according to Rom 10:14-21, the gospel has already been preached to the Jews. Paul cites Ps 19:4 "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the end of the earth". Although the apostles to the Jews have finished their task, like Paul in the East, "they have not been everywhere or preached the gospel to every individual Jew, yet their task in respect of the whole of Israel has been completed. Those parts of Israel to which they have preached stand for the whole, for the Jewish people; and Paul can therefore go on to assert (10:21, and ch 11) that Israel is unbelieving and hardened". (25) The logic of Paul's policy is further spelt out in Rom 11:16, "For if the first fruit is holy, the lump is holy; and if the root is holy so are the branches". Even though the immediate reference here is to Israel (to which we must return), Munck is correct to see that this view of Paul also extended to the nations.

Sanders may therefore be correct in his view that no particular agreement had been reached concerning the Jews in the Diaspora. The reason however is not just the urgency of the early Christian mission but the fact that Paul sees himself as apostle to the nations which may mean that whilst he is apostle to the Gentiles, his work is not exclusively limited to Gentiles, but like Jesus before him, he is willing and able to spend time



with individuals who ethnically are outside the main focus of his mission. (26)

Thus far Paul has emerged as a practical missionary who was willing to adjust and revise his mission policies in the light of the Spirit's guidance in the face of the changing circumstances of his ministry. But Paul's awareness of the divine purpose was not simply gleaned from day to day situations in the midst of his churches. Munck has rightly stressed Paul's strong eschatological interest and the apostle's conviction that he is specially called to be the apostle to the (Gentile) nations. Paul was also a serious student of scripture; thus his authorization for turning to the Gentiles and conducting a mission among them - instead of waiting for the conversion of Israel first - has a basis in scripture as well as in intense reflection upon the significance of success or failure in the proclamation of the gospel. Hence the wealth of scriptural citation in Rom 9-11. (27)

In the traditional imagery of the end times, the Gentiles were to be blessed as a result of God's blessing upon Israel. Indirectly and derivatively they would share in salvation. As Paul writes Romans, however, two things are crystal clear - Israel as a whole is unbelieving and Paul's mission to the Gentiles is eminently successful. In reflection upon the scriptures Paul has come to realise that it can no longer depend on Israel whether the Gentiles may partake in the blessedness of the kingdom of God, as Jewish apocalyptic doctrine taught. The source of Paul's thought here is his perception of how God throughout Israel's history has used the nations both for Israel's salvation and Israel's correction. In Rom 9 Paul notes how God used Pharaoh no less than Israel to reveal his power and proclaim his mercy because "he has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills" (9:18) for "it depends not upon man's will or exertion but upon God's mercy" (9:20). Thus according to Paul, scripture shows that God can use nations and their leaders both positively and negatively

in his purpose of mercy. (28) At times Israel may experience the chastening hand of God's judgment by means of Gentile nations but her ultimate destiny is still the object of His providential purpose.

This is one source of Paul's thinking on the pattern of events in the early Christian mission. The success of the Gentile mission and the relative failure of the Jewish mission caused him to look to scripture for a new understanding of the divine activity. Just as God used the nations or their leaders for the ultimate good of Israel in times past, so now in the present, He will use the nations or Gentiles once again to bring Israel back to Himself. Thus Paul sees himself as indirectly enabling the salvation of Israel while focusing his main attention upon the Gentiles.

There seems to be general agreement that Paul believed that the final restoration of Israel would be the work of God himself. (29) The "no" of Israel to the gospel - her partial hardening (11:25) - would persist until the Parousia. All Israel will then be saved (11:26-32) when the fullness (plērōma) of the Gentiles has come in. This has normally been taken to represent "the full number of the elect from among the Gentiles", but Paul thinks representatively and collectively rather than in terms of elect individuals. As Munck shows, behind this is the tradition which we find in Mk 13:10 "that the Gospel must first be preached to all nations before the Parousia". (30) Paul has in mind the conversion of representatives from all the nations, the first fruits of the harvest of redeemed humanity. It is this offering which Paul as apostle to the Gentiles seeks to provide and thus to fulfil the expected pilgrimage of the nations to worship the God of Zion.

One other aspect of Israel's final redemption probably originated from Paul's study of scripture. The final "yes" of Israel will come after "the fullness of the nations" but Paul envisages it as happening through jealousy. In the words of Deut 32:21, "I will provoke them to jealousy with them that are no nation, I will

anger them with a nation void of understanding", Paul found a clue as to the means which he believed would be effective in finally turning the Jews to God. (31) When they perceived the blessings enjoyed by Gentiles, they themselves would be jealous when they realised what they were missing. The importance for us of this perception of Paul is not so much in whether history has shown it to be justified, but rather in the fact that he studied the scriptures for guidance in seeking solutions to missionary problems which from a human point of view seemed insurmountable, ie "the hardening of the Jews". One question still remains unanswered - what is the relationship between the jealousy resulting from the fullness of the nations and the final conversion of Israel. As we noted, this is generally taken to be by the direct action of God Himself - but the jealousy motif suggests that it is in fact the winning of the representatives from the nations which causes Israel's restoration. The latter fits in better with Paul's own statements and policy which suggest that he sees himself as indirectly contributing to the salvation of Israel.

## **V Unity and Diversity: Paul's Mission in a Pluralistic Situation**

Although it appears that Paul's normal practice would be to establish one church for both Jews and Gentiles in each area where he worked, it is possible that there was greater diversity in Rome than was normal because it was a Christian community lacking any one apostolic founder. What is distinctive in this letter is that Paul in chapters 14-15 accepts the right of both "the weak" and "the strong" Christians to follow their own consciences.

He calls for tolerance and mutual acceptance, not in the short term only until differences are overcome, but they are to accept one another openly and without reservation as Christ has accepted them. (32) Thus it would appear that although Paul can be somewhat authoritarian and uncompromising when the truth of the gospel is at stake, as in Galatians, when it is a matter of differing Christians following different lifestyles, he is in



fact very tolerant. As far as is humanly possible, he seeks for explicit evidence of Christian oneness in Christ. He is not afraid to indicate that he sides with "the strong" (15:1), but nevertheless he insists on the freedom of "the weak" to live differently. This corresponds well with his statements in 1 Cor 7:17, where he outlines his policy that Christians should continue in the calling in which they were called. (33) Thus it seems that in discerning the will of God Paul was careful to accept as given the situation which originated in Rome either prior to, or independently of, his own mission (rather than trying to undo it). He accepts the diversity as given and as an abiding reality.

His collection project which he has organised over a long period of time is now, as he writes to the Romans, well-nigh complete and he heads for Jerusalem with the collection and representatives of the Gentile churches. This collection is an expression of Paul's concern with unity between the Jewish and Gentile wings of the church. He accepts the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem as brethren, but there is some doubt about whether they will feel free to accept a collection from Gentiles that might compromise them with their Jewish neighbours.

It would appear then that Paul recognised the autonomy of the Christian conscience and was particularly willing to accommodate to the practices of others in a context where his pattern of Christian living differed from that to which these Christians had been originally introduced. Diversity in unity rather than a monochrome uniformity is the model of the church which emerges from Paul's letter to Rome.

## **Conclusion**

Romans is written after the earlier period of Paul's mission work in which the concordat about respecting separate mission areas and spheres of work had been operative. After Paul lost the battle over table-fellowship between Jews and Gentiles at Antioch, he was

forced to branch out as an independent missionary doing pioneer work and concentrating on setting up mixed churches mainly of Gentiles with some Jews who no longer followed a Jewish life-style. (34) But he has now finished all such work in the East and needs the help of the Romans for a mission in the West. (35) The peculiar origin and development of the house churches in Rome meant that there was the possibility that Paul could have been accused of building on another apostle's foundation. But Paul as apostle to the Gentile nations feels called and obligated to come to Rome. In so doing he is forced to consider his own and the Roman Christian attitude to Christians (and Jews) who differ radically from them.

Paul's theology of mission is thus constructed to meet the demands inherent in this diverse context. The picture of the apostle that emerges here is far from being that of a thoughtless activist rushing around the world under the duress of an overwhelming but unenlightened zeal. We discover instead an apostle pursuing a definite policy which has both an apocalyptic and a scriptural basis. Although Paul may sometimes give the appearance of being somewhat in a strait-jacket, this is certainly not true. He is neither unaware of, nor unwilling to adjust to, changing circumstances in his mission work. Romans shows how seriously and positively he took these into account. Paul looks for divine guidance as to the detailed policy and strategy required to put into practice the divine will in each given situation.

Paul sees himself as called to co-operate with God's universal and cosmic purpose revealed in the Christ-event. His call is thus similar to the prophets of old, and the pattern of divine activity is to be discerned from a study of the scriptures. The final events of salvation will turn out to be a modified version of the hopes expressed by the prophets, especially Second Isaiah. Paul is like the prophets who called Israel to covenant faithfulness, in the context of the nations whom Yahweh could use to discipline her

when unfaithful. But in Romans it is not a question of Israel over against the nations. Nor is it a question of Jew or Gentile, but Jew and Gentile within the overarching plan of God. The mission of Jesus, like that of Paul according to Romans concerns both Jew and Gentile (15:8-12). Gentile inclusion does not signify the revoking of Israel's heritage (11:29) but rather the way in which Israel will be restored in a renewed covenant which includes Gentiles also. In the renewed covenant there is no need for Gentiles to become Jews and, correspondingly, there is no need for Jews to give up their Jewishness on accepting the gospel.

In the diversity of the Roman house churches, some of which were possibly loosely attached to synagogues, the renewed covenant demands mutual acceptance in Christ, despite cultural or racial differences. On the one hand this meant that a mainly Gentile house church must be willing to accept a Christian Jew who wanted to worship with them. But it would also mean that if there were Jewish house-churches still in contact with synagogue life and discipline, the churches of the Gentiles must likewise acknowledge such as fellow-members in Christ, despite their differing life-style (and vice-versa). Only thus will all God's beloved in Rome be able to assist in preventing the rejection of Paul and the collection in Jerusalem, and likewise provide the proper missionary support for the new outreach in Spain. Only as the Gentiles are brought to faith will Israel be provoked to emulation and Israel's recovery of faith usher in the eschaton, the resurrection of the dead. (36)

We see thus that in respect of Israel, the covenant, the law and the scriptures Paul's mission theology is not simply the inbreaking of a new order with the subsequent destruction of the old - it is rather the transformation of the old by Him who makes all things new. (37)

\*The original draft of this paper was prepared in 1985-6 at the request of Professor John Ferguson, then President of the Selly Oak Colleges. It is published here



in grateful appreciation and memory of his life and work, particularly at Selly Oak.

## NOTES

- 1 Cf. N. A. Dahl, "The Missionary Theology in the Epistle to the Romans," Studies in Paul 70f. Dahl is one of a small number of scholars who have considered Romans in this light. He stresses that Paul's theology and his missionary activity were inseparable from each other; he characterises Paul's theology as a "christocentric theology of mission with biblical history and eschatology as its framework" (pp. 70-1).
- 2 In Paul, the Law and the Jewish People, (Fortress Press, 1983) 145f.
- 3 Cf. J. C. Beker, Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Thought and Life (Fortress Press 1980) especially 92.
- 4 Cf. my article "Why did Paul write Romans," Expository Times 85 (1973-4) 264-9. Dahl has a different view, "It is not the problems of a local church but the universal gospel and Paul's own mission which in this letter provide the point of departure for theological discussion" (op. cit. 78). For other viewpoints see The Romans Debate (ed. by K. P. Donfried; Augsburg, 1977) and Dieter Zeller, Der Brief an die Römer (Regensburg, 1985) 11f.
- 5 Cf. C. E. B. Cranfield, The International Critical Commentary: Romans, Vol 2 (T. & T. Clark, 1979) 780f.
- 6 Cf. E. Käsemann Commentary on Romans (SCM, 1979) 398-404; c.f also the as yet unpublished paper by Robert Jewett, "Paul, Phoebe and the Spanish Mission," in The Social World of Early Christianity and Judaism Essays in Tribute to K C Kee ed J Neusner et al, (Fortress Press, 1988) 142-61.
- 7 Cf. Käsemann's comment, "If Paul is speaking emphatically of 'evangelising', all the reservations in vv 10-12 seem to be 'pointless' ", op. cit. p. 20. Cf. Also M. Kettunen's comment, "Rome

- therefore has its importance for Paul primarily in reference to the journey to Spain", Der Abfassungszweck des Römersbriefes (Helsinki, 1979) 161. W. Schmithals, because of the apparent conflict between 1:13f and 15:14f, concludes that Paul wrote two letters to Rome, Der Römerbrief als historisches Problem (Gütersloh, 1975). However, there is little manuscript evidence for his thesis. Cf. H. Gamble The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans (Eerdmans, 1977).
- 8 L. Gaston, "Paul and Jerusalem" in From Jesus to Paul (eds. P. Richardson and J. C. Hurd; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1984) 61-73.
- 9 Cf. P. Achtemeier, Romans: Interpretation Commentary (John Knox Press, 1985) 67f.
- 10 Cf. E Käsemann, op. cit. 29.
- 11 Cf. Achtemeier, op. cit. 69.
- 12 Cf. my article "Romans III is a Key to the Structure and Thought of the Letter," Novum Testamentum XXIII (1981) 35f.
- 13 This is not to deny a strong element of discontinuity, cf. my article, "Christianity and Judaism: Continuity and Discontinuity" International Bulletin of Missionary Research 8 (2) April (1984) 54f.
- 14 Cf. L. Gaston "Paul and the Torah" in Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity (ed A. T. Davies; New York, 1979) 66, and Sanders op. cit. 38.
- 15 Cf. my article "The Freedom and Faithfulness of God in Relation to Israel" Journal for the Study of the New Testament 13 (1981) 27f.
- 16 Ibid p. 33, cf. also Achtemeier op. cit. p. 165.
- 17 "Paul and Jerusalem" op. cit. p. 65-6.
- 18 R. E. Brown and J. P. Meier, Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity (Paulist Press, 1983) 1-8.
- 19 Contra Beker who speaks of a dialogue with Jews op. cit. 91. Beker does recognise the apologetic element in Romans but puts too much emphasis upon polemic op. cit. p. 78-83.



- 20 Cf. Sanders op. cit. p. 185-90. On Paul's conversion cf. "Some Notes on Paul's Conversion" by J. Gager, NTS 27 697f.
- 21 Cf. Achtemeier op. cit. p. 177f.
- 22 Cf. my article "The Freedom and Faithfulness of God in Relation to Israel" op. cit. p. 36.
- 23 Op. cit. p. 189.
- 24 Cf. J. Munck, Paul and the Salvation of Mankind (SCM, 1959) 52; see also A. Hultgren, Paul's Gospel and Mission (Fortress, 1985) which I received just as I was completing this paper.
- 25 Op. cit. p. 53f.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Cf. my article in n. 15 above. Much research is now being devoted to this aspect of Paul. Cf. H. Hübner, Law in Paul's Thought (Edinburgh; T. T. Clark, 1984) and H. Räisänen, Paul and the Law (Tübingen; Mohr, 1983).
- 28 Paul's theology derives from the premise that God has consigned (sunekleisen) all to disobedience "so that He might have mercy upon all (11:32). Cf. my article in n. 15 above (p. 31).
- 29 Cf. Sanders op. cit. pp. 194-5.
- 30 Op. cit. pp. 134f, Cranfield, op. cit. p. 575.
- 31 Cf. Cranfield op. cit. p. 556.
- 32 Cf. R. Jewett, Christian Tolerance (Westminster, 1982) p. 134.
- 33 Contrary to some recent scholarship, Paul did not force all Jewish Christians to make a complete break with Jewish law, customs etc, cf. my article in n. 15 above, p. 44, n. 60; also Cranfield op. cit. pp. 845f and E. Larsson "Paul: Law and Salvation" New Testament Studies 31 (1985) 425-36; contra F. Watson, Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles (Cambridge, 1986) 100.
- 34 Cf. J. D. G. Dunn, "The Incident at Antioch," JSNT 18 (1983) 3-57.
- 35 Cf. R. D. Aus, "Paul's Travel Plans to Spain and the 'Full Number of the Gentiles' of Rom 11:25," NT 21 (1979) 232-62.
- 36 R. P. Martin takes Rom 11:12 (a), Israel's fall into unbelief and riches resulting for the Gentiles

(the reconciliation of the world) as the first event leading to the eschaton; the second will be Israel's recovery of faith leading to the resurrection of the dead (Rom 11:15): Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1981) 134.

- 37 Cf. my article "Salvation for Jews and Gentiles: Krister Stendahl and Paul's Letter to the Romans" Studia Biblica 3 (1978) , Sheffield University Press (1981) 65-72.

W S Campbell

The Bible in Irish Presbyterianism. (Part ii)

R. Buick Knox.

In the meantime, while these domestic issues were exciting the Assembly and the Church, the influence of the wider movements of biblical and scientific study was being felt in the Church. A mild injection of the new outlook came with the appointment of the Scottish scholar, David Smith, to be the professor of Theology at Magee College in Londonderry in 1909. He was translated to the College in Belfast in 1922. His writings showed a wide knowledge of the trends of biblical studies. His books, The Days of His Flesh and The Disciple's Commentary brought the Jesus of the Gospels before his readers and showed how the different strands in the Gospels illuminated the life and work of the Saviour. Principal Paul paid tribute to Smith as an author of world-wide reputation, a teacher and writer of distinction and a friend of students. He was also known to many through his correspondence column in The British Weekly in which for many years he answered readers' queries with clarity, learning and charity. His calm style conveyed sound and fresh learning without arousing bitter controversy. He also was writing during the troubled years during and after the Great War of 1914 to 1918 when controversial issues tended to be muted.<sup>27</sup>

The appointment of Ernest Davey to the Church History professorship in the College in Belfast in 1917 brought into the service of the Church a young man of vast erudition, gracious spirit and courageous directness of speech. He combined in himself the warmth of a Keswick experience of the call of God and a thorough acquaintance with current theological trends.<sup>28</sup> His appointment was welcomed by many students but in the 1920s there were also students sensitive to any variations from the traditional mould of teaching. The title of his book, The Changing Vesture of the Faith, indicated his conviction that the Christian Faith as taught by the Presbyterian Church remained secure and unchanged but its expression had to change in response to growing study and knowledge in many fields of learning and



experience. This hospitality of mind to new ideas had its dangers; more than the vesture might be changed in the process and there were those who held that the traditional vesture of the Westminster Confession was an essential part of the package of the Faith.(29) Davey's method of teaching could be disturbing as he brought under scrutiny the text of the Scriptures and the doctrines of the Faith. Not all ministers and members of the Church were able to acclimatise themselves to his ways of thought. When Professor T.Alan Sinclair, the Dean of the Faculty of Theology in Queen's University, Belfast, presented Davey for an honorary doctorate in 1953 he said that "great learning, critical acumen and intellectual honesty" which were outstanding features of Davey's life were not popular qualities. Among his most vocal critics was an organization called the Bible Standards League led by Mr William H. Snoddy. This League sought with great zeal to awaken the Church to what it believed was Davey's departure from the Faith of the Church.

At the same time, the Church was facing a problem from another angle. Some able candidates for the ministry and some potential elders were refusing to subscribe to the Westminster Confession in the required form. They saw these terms as an acceptance of the doctrine of election which they held was not in accord with the main thrust of biblical teaching. They wanted a relaxing rather than a stiffening of the terms of subscription. In 1925 a committee was set up to consider the situation. Principal Paul was appointed Convener. In 1926 he reported to the Assembly that the committee had not reached the stage of making any recommendations for a change in the terms. He asked for the committee to be reappointed. An amendment was proposed asking that the committee be thanked and discharged. This was narrowly defeated by 299 to 288. It was then agreed to enlarge the committee by adding six ministers and eight elders. in 1926 the committee reported that it had examined the practice in other presbyterian churches.(30)

The Church of Scotland asked for subscription in

terms of belief in "the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith". This allowed a degree of latitude in that it did not list what the fundamental doctrines were. However, the Church had recently secured the passage of an Act of Parliament in preparation for the union with the Free Church of Scotland and this Act listed the specific doctrines held by the Church; these are belief in God the Father Almighty, in Jesus Christ his only-begotten Son incarnate for our Salvation, the sole King and Head of his Church, in the Holy Spirit, three Persons in the Unity of the Godhead, in the forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God through faith in Christ, in the renewing of the Holy Spirit and in eternal life. These articles of faith cover the points which parents are asked to confess at the baptism of their children and which new communicants are asked to confess at their admission.<sup>31</sup> The Act also left in the Church the power to further define its doctrines and the sense in which they were understood.

The United Free Church recognised liberty of judgment on points of doctrine which did not enter into the substance of the Faith and also claimed the right to "interpret, add to, modify or change her subordinate standards", and the prescribed questions asked for assent to the fundamental doctrines contained therein.

The Presbyterian Church of England recognized liberty of opinion on such points as do not enter into the substance of the Faith and also claimed the right to interpret, alter, add to or modify the subordinate standards. The prescribed questions asked for an assurance of belief in the substance of the Christian Faith contained therein. The English Church did not require written subscription.

The Presbyterian Church of Wales did not demand written subscription to its Confession of Faith, but there could be hesitation, if not refusal, to ordain any ordinand detected of being out of harmony with the faith and practice of the Church.

In the light of these examples the committee had considered if any change was desirable in the terms of subscription in the Irish Church. Rev James Hunter, the retired minister of Knock Church in Belfast, withdrew from the committee. He was opposed to any change in the terms and he was deeply involved in preparing the charges on which Professor Davey was about to be brought before the courts of the Church. The other members of the committee agreed to suggest two changes in the questions. The first question should be amended to ask if the ordinand believed that the Scriptures, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, were the only infallible rule of faith and practice. The fourth question should be revised so as to ask the ordinand if he accepted the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms as "an historic testimony for truth and against error and as a continuing bond of union for members of the Church". The formula of subscription should be revised to read, "I accept these standards as an historic testimony for truth and against error and as a continuing bond of union for members of the Church". Paul submitted these recommendations as an overture for consideration at the next Assembly.

These recommendations had a degree of obscurity. They did not define what were the fundamental doctrines to be drawn from Scripture, and acceptance of the Confession and Catechisms as "an historic testimony for truth" was not exactly the same as accepting them as a present testimony of personal belief. It is therefore not surprising to find another overture above the name of Dr James Little, the minister of Castlereagh, asking the next Assembly to issue "a statement of the doctrines, faith and belief of the church".(32)

When the next Assembly met in 1927 these matters were overshadowed by the case of Professor Davey. Hunter and Snoddy and their supporters laid five charges against him. These charges were based on extracts from his writings and from the lecture notes of some of his students. These charges claimed that he was guilty of



"teaching doctrines contrary to the Word of God and the standards of the Church". The charges were (i) that he denied that God pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in his sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, (ii) that he taught what was contrary to Scripture on the absolute perfection of Christ's character, (iii) that he taught what was contrary to the Confession on the inspiration, infallibility and divine authority of Holy Scripture, (iv) that he taught what was contrary to the doctrine that "the sinfulness of all sins proceeds only from the creature and not from God", and (v) that he taught that the doctrine of the Trinity was not in the Word of God. These charges were heard by the Belfast Presbytery in fourteen sessions ranging from 15 February to 29 March 1927. At the end, Davey was acquitted of the charges by large majorities, in all cases except one by more than six to one. Davey claimed that on the first charge he had been misrepresented, and on the others he defended his teaching in impressive pleas of justification; he claimed he was faithful to Scripture, to the essential faith of the Church, to sound learning and to Christian experience.

The case was appealed to the Assembly in June. Hunter, Snoddy and others spoke in support of the charges. Presbytery representatives defended its decision and Davey spoke on his own behalf. It was proposed that the Assembly, having before it the record of the trial by Presbytery and having heard Davey's avowal of his own beliefs, his regret that his statements had been misunderstood, and his pleas of justification, should dismiss the appeal but also caution all professors to be mindful of their duty in all their teaching to maintain conformity to the standards of the Church. This was passed by 707 to 82. Davey's gracious spirit under the trial and his shining faith won over several who had intended to vote against him.<sup>33</sup>

Davey continued his ministry in the College and in the courts of the Church. In 1946 he was given a further doctorate of divinity by Edinburgh University; the

citation said the degree was given "in recognition of the exceptional versatility of his gifts and the admirable service he has rendered to presbyterian scholarship and education". He was convener of an Assembly committee which dealt with the causes of war, with the interpretation of the Church's task in the present crisis, and with national and international problems. For twenty years from 1938 to 1958 he presented to the Assembly reports which dealt in depth with many serious issues. When he retired from the convener-ship the Assembly said that he had brought to the preparation of these reports "massive biblical and theological scholarship, as well as a shrewd insight into the many ethical, social and political problems of this perplexing age". In 1953 he had been made Moderator of the Assembly.

The decisive acquittal in 1927 had been a great relief for the Assembly. The Church had come through a situation which might have torn it apart. The Assembly was not in the mood to take any steps which would revive the tension. Therefore, when it turned to the overture from Paul's committee on the revision of the prescribed questions and of the formula there was obvious uneasiness about where the matter might lead. Rev J.T. Anderson, minister of Bannside, Banbridge, was asked to lead in prayer for guidance. Paul pointed out that in the Code of the Church it was specified that subscription signified "adherence to the principles set forth in the Confession as a system of doctrine and worship" and the Rule of Faith stated that the Confession taught what the Church understood the Bible to teach on certain important points of doctrine and worship. These statements did not specify what the points were nor did they claim that every statement in the Confession was to be regarded as essential biblical teaching. Yet, in the formula of subscription that equation is made and signatories are asked to accept all the teaching of the Confession as in accord with the Bible. This, said Paul, was asking more than the Rule of Faith required and there was need of relief; there was also need for clearer definition of what were the "certain important

points" to which the Rule of Faith referred.(34)

The overture was left over until 1928 when an amendment was introduced proposing that as the Church agreed on the fundamental doctrines and regarded the present formula as a declaration of adherence to the said doctrines, and inasmuch as the proposed change had caused agitation in the Church, the Assembly should proceed no further with the proposed revision and should remove the overture from the books. Paul and his seconder, Mr John Williamson, J.P., withdrew the overture and the amendment was passed unanimously.(35) By this decision the Assembly left unchanged the questions and the formula. The Rule of Faith also remained unchanged and by its affirmation of the right of private judgment and the duty to receive light from any quarter it continued to enable the Church to embrace a considerable variety of emphases among its ministers and elders. At times this has been an uneasy comprehension.

The Assembly has from time to time issued statements setting forth the doctrines which it holds to have biblical warrant and to be the essential teaching of the Church. The growth of conversations with other Churches made it desirable to have such a statement. In 1961 the Assembly approved a declaration which had at its heart the statement that the Word of God as set forth in the Scriptures was the only infallible rule of faith and practice and that the church was under obligation to reform its faith and practice if this was shown to be necessary in the light of this word.(36) In 1962 the Assembly approved a revision of the questions put to ministers and elders at the periodic presbytery visitations of congregations. The elders are asked if the minister faithfully preaches the doctrines of the Gospel set forth in the Confession of Faith, "especially the doctrines of the Trinity, the deity and humanity of Christ, man's fallen condition, his recovery through the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, justification through faith in Christ, the deity, personality and work of the Holy Spirit, the Church and her missionary task,



the necessity of faith and repentance wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, and, as a mark of being in Christ, a life of practical godliness".(37) The word "especially" suggests that these are the main doctrines but that there are also other doctrines which the Church holds. The continuing lack of precision prompted a plea to the Assembly in 1968 to make its position clear so that all who had to subscribe to the Confession might know exactly the doctrines to which they were assenting.(38) Some members of Assembly now questioned the Church's right to revise or augment its doctrines without incurring legal risks to the tenure of its properties. Professor John Barkley had urged the Assembly to prepare Declaratory Articles on the Scottish model and thus assert its right to define its own doctrines.(39) In 1972 the Assembly approved a proposal to ask Parliament to pass legislation acknowledging the Church's spiritual independence.(40) In 1973 the Assembly's judicial committee advised the Assembly not to seek such a law because the Church already had as much liberty as it needed or was likely to need.(41) Dr Barkley lodged a learned paper to protest against this advice; he held that from New Testament times through the period of the early Church and of the Fathers and through the Medieval and Reformation periods the Church had asserted its right to make and revise its understanding of its doctrines; he claimed that the church would be unfaithful to its fundamental position if it did not secure its freedom.(42) However, these issues were by now being swamped by the violence which was beginning to affect Northern Ireland. The Assembly of 1966 had sensed the signs of unrest and had passed a special resolution which also took into account the messages coming from the Vatican Council. The Assembly once again declared the Word of God as set forth in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice. It also listed the doctrines as already set forth in 1962 and said it had no intention of "accepting any doctrine or standard contrary to God's Word or beside it in matters of faith and worship, but rather, not refusing light from any quarter, would, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, seek to commend

what we believe and preach to every man's conscience in the sight of God, whether it be in conversations with other Churches, in dealings with fellow-citizens in society, or in missionary undertakings in Ireland or abroad". The resolution also stressed the duty to respect the consciences of others and defend the common liberties and civic rights of all people, without regard to colour, class or creed. The Assembly ordered this resolution to be read in all the churches.(43)

The turmoil of recent years, the divisions in the community, the relations with other Churches and with the Church of Rome, and some features of the Church's own life have raised issues on which the General Assembly has found it difficult to agree on what guidance is to be drawn from the Bible.

The ordination of women to offices in the Church was proposed in an overture submitted to the Assembly in 1924. It was received and sent down to presbyteries for study and report. Twelve presbyteries were in favour of their ordination but twenty-one were opposed to it; the total of the votes in the presbyteries showed 146 in favour and 251 against; one presbytery did not vote and one was equally divided.(44) An overture asking for a decision to make women eligible to be ruling elders was submitted in 1925 and this was approved by the Assembly in 1926 by 149 to 144.(45) In 1929 an overture was submitted to the Assembly asking that women be eligible for the office of the ministry on the same terms as men but this was not followed up in 1930. It was over forty years before the issue was raised again. An overture was submitted in 1972 and it was sent down to the presbyteries. Presbyteries had by now been reorganised and there were fewer presbyteries; eighteen out of the twenty-one supported the overture and three opposed; the votes in presbyteries were 410 in favour of the ordination of women and 132 against. With such an affirmative sign of the mind of the church the Assembly proceeded to make this the law of the Church. The Assembly resisted an attempt to delay the decision on the ground that the move might be "a flat contradiction of Scripture

teaching".(46) In 1975 the Assembly approved the recommendation that when there was an election of elders or church committees the congregations should be reminded that women are eligible on the same terms as men.(47) Women have by now shown that they can be effective ministers and elders in the Irish Church, as they have also been in many other Reformed Churches. There is a section in the Assembly which continues to maintain that the ordination of women violates a clear biblical prohibition set forth by Paul who forbids women to be given positions of authority over men or to be allowed to speak in church.(48) It can be pointed out that Paul did not condemn slavery which was a widespread feature of life in his day, but he laid down the principles of human dignity in the sight of God which ultimately showed that slavery and Christianity could not co-exist. Similarly, he took an attitude to women which was common in his day, but he also laid down the principles which broke down that attitude and has led many churches to see that in Christ men and women can both be called into his service. Since 1981 there have been memorials from ministers asking that on grounds of conscience they be excused from taking part in the ordination of women.(49) The Assembly has taken the view that ministers at their ordination have vowed to exercise their ministry in accord with the law of the Church and therefore ought not to be excused from their duty but the Assembly has also given presbyteries the rather obscure advice that they should have a pastoral concern for those who have these conscientious objections.(50) The Assembly has also resisted attempts to get it to reject the candidature of women students.(51)

A further issue concerning the relation of the Confession to the Bible arises from the identification in the Confession of the Pope of Rome with the Man of Sin and the Antichrist mentioned in the Book of Revelation. In 1986 the Assembly of the Church of Scotland considered this point and in 1987 declared that this was no longer taken as the belief of the Church of Scotland. Following that example the Irish Assembly also considered the matter in 1986 and an overture asking for a



statement of the Assembly's position was lodged in 1987. In 1988 the Assembly passed a resolution which stated that it was "not manifestly evident from Scripture" that the Pope was "the personal and literal fulfillment of the Biblical figure of the Antichrist and the Man of Sin". The Assembly said that "a variety of views has long been held on this topic consistent with a loyal regard for the authority of Holy Scripture and a genuine acceptance of Reformation standards". Yet even this mild and hesitant withdrawal was bitterly opposed in the Assembly. The decision was approved by 317 to 270. Many of those who opposed the decision went on to record their dissent.(52)

Finally, the Assembly has been much troubled because of its membership of the World Council of Churches. The Irish Presbyterian Church had been involved from the start in the movement to bring the Churches of the world closer together to witness to their common faith that Jesus is Lord. The various strands of this movement came together in 1948 to form the World Council of Churches. The Irish presbyterian representatives had a strong influence in strengthening the biblical basis of the Council which now is "a fellowship of Churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit".(53) However, due to the influence of several of its younger member Churches the Council supported groups whose purpose was to combat racism. Some of these groups were believed to have supported violent actions against racist governments. This caused much alarm among Irish Presbyterians many of whom were themselves the victims of terrorist violence. The Assembly was much agitated by fears that the funds of the World Council of Churches were being used to support violent movements. These fears were not removed by the assurance that the support was from a special fund and not from the general contributions of the member Churches. Added to this was an increasing agitation that involvement in the Council could risk a departure from

the biblical standards of the Church. For several years the Assembly had stormy debates in which appeals were made to Scripture to build up the case for terminating the Church's membership of the Council. This reached a climax in 1980 when the Assembly decided by 433 to 327 to terminate its membership.(54) This decision was much regretted by other member Churches. The Irish Church had brought to the work of the Council the experience of a Church accustomed to the harsh reality of life in a country where the encounter with the Church of Rome and the inheritance of past political, social and religious divisions made co-existence, not to mention, co-operation, a hazardous hope, and where there could be no easy answer to Christ's prayer that his disciples might all be one. This Irish experience was a salutary injection into a Council where grandiose conferences and copious reports could too easily be taken as the sure response to the Word of God in the Bible. The majority in the Assembly claimed that the decision was a witness to the presbyterian faithfulness to biblical truth but there are many to whom it is not manifestly evident that the decision was a mark of obedience to the Word of God.

This decision has been followed in 1989 by the decision of the Assembly to refuse to join the reconstituted British Council of Churches in which the Church of Rome and the Black-led churches will have a place. The plan for the new Council expresses hope that its member Churches will be ready to "progress beyond co-operation to mutual commitment in the search for closer and closer unity in Christ". It affirms that the Churches are "Churches together in pilgrimage". During a very heated debate the Assembly was swayed by the argument that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland dare not enter a commitment involving the Church of Rome many of whose doctrines were contrary to the biblical doctrines held by the Irish Church. It was claimed that membership of the new Council would dilute and compromise the Church's loyalty to its biblical basis. Supporters of the plan held that the proposed Council was the very place where the Irish Presbyterian witness to its biblical standards should be heard and where its hard experience of living

alongside the Church of Rome would be needed as a reminder that there was no easy solution to age-old divisions. By a vote of 453 to 289 the Assembly decided not to join the Council. This decision has caused much dismay among the other presbyterian and reformed Churches in Britain. They valued highly the Irish presbyterian part in the work of the old Council and they also respected the courage and constancy of the Irish Church in the recent years of trial. Once again, the majority claims that the decision is a witness to the presbyterian faithfulness to biblical truth and, once again, to many inside and outside the Church this will not seem manifestly evident.

Through the century and a half since the formation of the General Assembly the Bible has had a central place in the life of the Church. It has been the core of the teaching in Sunday Schools and Bible Classes. It has been read in the services of the Church, though it has to be noted that in Anglican worship with its regular round of lessons from the Old Testament, the Epistles and the Gospels and with the singing of all the Psalms, people often hear far more of the Bible than do those in presbyterian services. The Bible has also been the basis from which sermons begin and on which they are meant to build.

The Bible has also been earnestly studied as the source of guidance for faith and practice. The Confession and Catechisms have on the whole provided sound instruction on the doctrines of God, creation and redemption, and they have kept before the Church a high biblical view of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Too often, indeed, ministers and members of the Church have drawn ideas from the Bible which have been hard to reconcile with the teaching of Christ, but in the sweep of the story of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland the entrance of the Word has given light. The church can still commend the study of the Bible in the confidence that through its words people will still hear the Word of God and that it will still kindle the light of faith by which we will see what we are to believe



concerning God and what duty God requires of the human race.

R. Buick Knox.

NOTES

- 27 R.Allen, op.cit., 261, 309-310. Smith produced twenty volumes.
- 28 A.A.Fulton, J. Ernest Davey (1970); R.Allen, op.cit., 310.
- 29 The Changing Vesture of the Faith was published in 1923. Towards the end of his life he published The Gospel of John which was surprisingly traditional; it was rather overshadowed by the magisterial works of C.H.Dodd.
- 30 MGA 1925, 22; 1926, 41 & 46; Reports to GA 1926, 148-152.
- 31 Augustus Muir, John White (1958), 466.
- 32 MGA 1926.
- 33 Record of the Trial of Rev. Prof. J.E.Davey by the Belfast Presbytery, 1927; MGA 1927, 40-44.
- 34 MGA 1927, 56; Reports to GA 1927, 74-75.
- 35 MGA 1928, 41.
- 36 MGA 1961, 48; submitted by A.A.Fulton & T.H.Mullin.
- 37 MGA 1962, 55
- 38 MGA 1968, 20; submitted by T.C.Patterson & J.L.M.Haire.
- 39 J.M.Barkley, op.cit.
- 40 MGA 1972, 38; submitted by A.J.Weir and J.M.Barkley.
- 41 Reports to GA 1973, 30; MGA 45.
- 42 MGA 1973, 53-55
- 43 MGA 1966, 27; submitted by S.J.Park and A.J.Weir.
- 44 MGA 1924, 30; 1925, 52; Reports to GA 1925, 130-131.
- 45 MGA 1925, 53; 1926, 32.
- 46 MGA 1929, 52; 1972, 30; 1973, 24 & 28; Reports to GA 1973, 1-29.
- 47 MGA 1975, 29.
- 48 1 Cor.11:7-10; 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-12.
- 49 MGA 1981, 80.
- 50 MGA 1982, 39

- 51 MGA 1986, 78; 1987, 58.
- 52 MGA 1988, 54-56.
- 53 N.Goodall, The Ecumenical Movement (1964), 69.
- 54 MGA 1980, 54.

## Jesus's Knowledge of Greek.

J.M.Ross.

It is generally agreed,(1) from archaeological and literary evidence, that by the first century of the Christian Era Greek had sufficiently invaded Palestine to become the language of government, trade and law; it was the primary language of the towns and of the upper and middle classes. Even learned Jews read Greek and borrowed Greek terms. To quote from an article by A.W. Argyle,(2) "The fact that so characteristically Jewish an institution as the Sanhedrin derived its name from the Greek word sunedrion is an indication of the deep influence of the Greek language even in the very heart of Palestinian Judaism."

Aramaic continued to be the normal language of the common people and the rural areas. Greek was widely used in Lower Galilee but little known in Upper Galilee. Many people in Galilee must have been bilingual. It would appear that Jesus's public teaching was mostly if not entirely in Aramaic, because so many of his sayings recorded in the Synoptic Gospels imply an Aramaic original,(3) but the fact that bystanders at the crucifixion did not understand the cry Eloi eloi lema sabachthani implies that they did not know Aramaic, or at least that Mark (15:35) and Matthew (27:47) believed this to be the case.

Latin was little used at that time except by the Roman army and in circles directly connected with it.

It is not certain to what extent Hebrew was known or used.(4) It may have been known in and around Jerusalem, but for the purposes of this study it is not necessary to adjudicate on that question. In the synagogues the scriptures were probably read in Hebrew but followed by an Aramaic or Greek targum.

So much is common ground. On this basis it may be confidently asserted that Jesus must have known some Greek. This general position is corroborated by the



following particular pieces of evidence:

(a) Jesus did not come from the lowest stratum of society, though pious Christians have been tempted to assert that he did. He was well read in the scriptures and was brought up as a skilled craftsman.(5) His father and he must have used Greek to negotiate carpentry contracts. According to Mark 2:15 he had a house in Capernaum in which he was able to entertain a sizable company. He was therefore high enough up the social scale to move among people who spoke Greek.

(b) His parable show that he was familiar with the business of trade and government, which was usually transacted in Greek.

(3) Several of his intimate disciples were probably more familiar with Greek than with Aramaic. Andreas, Philippos and Thomas all had Greek names. Simon is a Greek substitute for Sumeon, and one of the Simons had a Greek nickname Petros which according to Mark (3:16) and Luke (6:14) was conferred by Jesus himself, though according to the Fourth Gospel (John 1:43) Jesus gave him the Aramaic name Kephas, and this would have been more appropriate because in Aramaic the word of rock (kepha) would have been identical with the name, whereas in Greek the nickname had to be changed from the feminine petra to the masculine petros. Anyway the fishermen among the disciples must have used Greek to sell their fish and Matthew to collect his taxes. According to the Fourth Gospel (1:45; 12:21) Peter, Andrew and Philip all came from the town of Bethsaida where Greek must have been spoken because it was located in Gentile territory, and it was to the Greek-speaking Philip that certain Greeks applied for permission to see Jesus, and Philip passed on the request jointly with the Greek-speaking Andrew (John 12: 20-22). Therefore it is probable that Jesus conversed with his disciples in Greek as well as in Aramaic.

(d) According to Mark (7:24-37) Jesus was able to talk with people in the Greek-speaking area of Tyre, Sidon and Decapolis. (The description of the Syro-Phoenician woman as Hellenis does not necessarily imply that her language was Greek; it merely means that she was not a Jew.)

(e) The trial of Jesus before Pilate must have been conducted in Greek, and the accounts of it do not suggest that there was an interpreter present, or any linguistic difficulty of communication.

In view of all this we may safely conclude that Jesus had some knowledge of Greek and spoke in that language whenever necessary. From this two particular consequences may be deduced.

The first concerns the petition for bread in the Lord's Prayer. Since Jesus's inner circle of disciples must have been a bilingual community some of whom may have been more familiar with Greek than with Aramaic, it is quite likely that some of his conversations with them were in Greek, and the Lord's Prayer may well have been given to them in Greek as well as in Aramaic. If it had been only in Aramaic, the word Abba would have been preserved, as it was in St Paul's teaching (Gal.4:6; Rom.8:15). This may account for the occurrence, in both versions of the prayer, of the peculiar word epiousios, unknown in contemporary Greek literature or epigraphy, which looks like a nonce-word coined by someone with a limited Greek vocabulary. Much has been written about the meaning of this word. Some scholars adopt Origen's conjecture that the word was derived from epi and ousia and meant "needed for existence", but in Biblical usage ousia means only property or possessions, and even in philosophy it meant substance or reality rather than existence. Others have derived it directly from the verb epienai and interpreted the petition as meaning "Give us this day the bread that comes to it", i.e. that belongs to it; this seems a somewhat artificial interpretation in default of any evidence that the word was actually used in this sense. It is much more likely that the

adjective epiousios was derived from the similar participle epiousa which was in common use, with or without hēmera, to denote the following day (Acts 7:26; 16:11; 20:15; 21:18; 23:11). Various other conjectures have been made, but need not be discussed here in view of Jerome's statement (in his commentary on Matt. 6:11) that in the Aramaic Gospel of the Nazarenes the word used is mahar, i.e. the bread of tomorrow.

Of course the normal word for tomorrow, both in Biblical and in other Greek was aurion, and it may be asked why, if the Lord meant his followers to ask for tomorrow's bread, he did not use that word. In reply, two explanations may be given. (1) Perhaps Jesus did not know the word aurion and had to invent his own substitute. (2) But he may have known aurion and deliberately avoided it because he did not want his followers simply to ask every day for a sufficiency of bread for the following day, but rather to request every day a foretaste of the Messianic banquet, and therefore coined a less specific word meaning the coming bread, the bread of the future.

This interpretation of epiousios, which scholars are increasingly accepting, brings the petition for bread into line with the rest of the Lord's Prayer. It belongs with Jesus' characteristic contrast between the heavenly realm in which God is everything and the imperfect world of time and space in which God is in process of making the heavenly actual upon earth. Just as we are to pray that God's Name may be hallowed upon earth and his Kingdom, which had drawn near to earth in the person and deeds of the Christ, may keep breaking through into this world until the great day when it is fully established here, so the bread which the Messiah's people will eat when the Kingdom fully comes, may be available to them here and now. Just as the heavenly Kingdom as God's demand keeps on bursting into the world to make it divine, so does the heavenly feast as God's gift.

Although the true meaning of the word epiousios was



soon lost to the Church, the word will have been preserved in the Dominical prayer because it was known to have been used by the Lord himself and therefore not to be paraphrased by some more ordinary Greek word. Had the prayer been given only in Aramaic it is likely that the Greek version would have used a more familiar and intelligible word in the petition for bread.

The second consequence of Jesus' knowledge of Greek concerns his use of the expression "the Son of Man". Jesus must have described himself by this title because it is difficult otherwise to understand how the Church came to attribute to him so obscure an expression which is almost if not entirely(6) unknown in the New Testament outside Jesus's own words recorded in the Gospels. But if so, whatever Aramaic expression he used in his public teaching (which we can only guess at), it is likely that he used the Greek expression ho huios tou anthrōpou when talking with his disciples, or at least approved the expression as a correct translation of the Aramaic. But if this is so, the invariable use of the definite article ho, in contradistinction to all Old Testament usage, shows that the phrase cannot have meant, as has recently been argued by some British scholars(7) "someone" or "a certain person" or "this person", for which other Greek expressions were ready to had, such as tis or anthrōpos tis or houtos or ho anthrōpos houtos. It looks as if the expression, which was not in current use, was deliberately chosen by Jesus because of its enigmatic character, to avoid making an explicit identification with the Messiah, which would have been misunderstood as a claim to be a political leader, a claim which would have caused him to fall foul of the Roman authorities before the time was ripe. The Greek seems intended to mean something like "the personage", "the individual", "the representative human being", and it seems likely that this was the force of the Aramaic equivalent, whatever that may have been.

We have here a divergence between two traditions in the early Church. On the one hand all four gospels firmly maintain a tradition that Jesus described himself

in various contexts, sometimes as ho huios tou anthrō pou as the rejected wanderer on earth, sometimes as the future glorified conqueror in heaven. Even the Fourth Gospel, which rarely records Jesus's ipsissima verba, is careful to include this characteristic expression at appropriate points in his pronouncements. Some of the Son-of-Man sayings in the other Gospels may not be authentic but may have included this title because it was known to have been used by the Master. On the other hand, apart from the tradition of how the Lord himself had described himself, the church had no use for the expression, either when addressing Jews, who would better understand Messiah, or Gentiles, who would better understand Lord or Son of God. Even for use within the Church, Christians probably found the expression too obscure for common use; it was not included in any credal statement or liturgical formula. It was also perhaps avoided because it appeared to overemphasize Jesus's humanity. The important thing in the early days of the Church was to acknowledge and proclaim Jesus as Lord, Son of God, even as an incarnation of God himself. But the writers of the Gospels could not abandon the title because, whatever it meant, it was known to have been used by the Lord himself, perhaps in the Greek form ho huios tou anthrōpou.

Thus the fact that Jesus knew some Greek may afford an explanation of why the records carefully preserved two obscure expressions --- epiousion and ho huios tou anthrōpou: they were known to have come in Greek from the lips of the Lord Jesus himself.

J. M. Ross

#### NOTES

1. This is the consensus of Saul Liebermann, Greek in Jewish Palestine (Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1942), pp. 1-38, 144ff., and Hellenism in Jewish Palestine (ibid. 1950) p. 205; Joseph Fitzmyer "The Language of Palestine in the First Century A.D." in Catholic Biblical Quarterly 32

(1970) 501-31; James Barr "Which Language did Jesus speak?" in Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 53 (1970) 9-29; A.W.Argyle "Greek among the Jews of Palestine in New Testament Times" in New Testament Studies 20 (1973) 87-89; Martin Hengel Judaism and Hellenism (tr. John Bowden, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1974) vol. i. pp. 58-64; , 103-5; Eric M. Meyers and James F. Strange Archaeology, the Rabbis and Early Christianity (SCM Press 1981).—

2. Op.cit. p.87
3. The question whether Jesus actually taught in Greek is argued pro and con by Ray Selby and Barnabas Lindars in Theology 86 (1963) 185-93 and 363-65.
4. See Barr, op.cit.; J.A.Emerton "The Problem of Vernacular Hebrew in the First Century and the Language of Jesus" in Journal of Theological Studies 24 (1973) 1-23; Klaus Beyer, The Aramaic Language (tr. J.F.Healey, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1986, Göttingen) pp. 40-43.
5. According to the better attested reading in Mark 6:3 Jesus was himself a carpenter as well as his father; a few early manuscripts and versions altered "carpenter" to "carpenter's son", as also did Matthew, doubtless in order to avoid attributing a manual trade to the Son of God.
6. The more probable reading in Acts 6:56 is theou, which an early copyist altered to anthrōpou to avoid the occurrence of theou twice in the same sentence.
7. Principally G.Vermes in an appendix to M.Black An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels (3rd edition 1967) and pp. 160-166 of his Jesus the Jew (1973); M.Casey in chapter 9 of Son of Man (SPCK 1979); and B. Lindars in Jesus Son of Man (SPCK 1983).



Genesis, by Claus Westermann, Tr. from Dutch by D.E.Green. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987. Pp. xii - 338. Distributed in the United Kingdom by T & T Clarke, Edinburgh.

This abridged edition of Westermann's very detailed three volume commentary on Genesis was originally published in Dutch for the series "Text and Interpretation". It could never replace, and was not intended to replace Westermann's massive three-volume commentary. Rather, it offers an excellent introduction to Westermann's thought and approach in relation to Genesis. The reader can become familiar with the author's main ideas and conclusions without the necessity of sifting through the detailed technical discussions on which they are based. Furthermore, unlike the three-volume commentary, the Hebrew text is transliterated making this work accessible to a wider readership.

Included in the abridged edition is Westermann's own translation of Genesis. For the most part this is based on the MT and where emendations are made, they are marked with apostrophes. For technical details about the philological reasoning behind these emendations the reader must refer to the unabridged work.

Limited space in the abridged edition has led to the omission of the very comprehensive appendices and indices which make the unabridged commentary so easy to use for research purposes. The same applies to the massive amount of bibliographical information which features as a main characteristic of Westermann's work. Probably limited space also explains why a number of valuable "Excursus" sections have been dropped. These include: "Blessing" (vol. 1:139); "Eden" (vol. 1:208); "The Mark of Cain" (vol. 1:312); "Other Ancient Flood Narrative" (vol. 1:399); "Human Sacrifice" (vol. 1:357) and "The Designations for God in 49:22-26" (vol. 3:239).

In spite of these necessary omissions a great deal of material is clearly presented in the abridged edition. It provides a compact and easily read introduc-

tion to Westermann's interpretation of Genesis. A scholarly exegesis of the text is given including the elucidation of obscure or difficult words and phrases. Where further details are available in the unabridged work, the reader is alerted to this and given the necessary reference. As one would expect, however, there is inadequate space in the abridged edition for detailed technical discussions of difficult and obscure passages. For example, 12: 1-3 which is dealt with in depth in volume 2 of Westermann's is allocated less than two pages in the abridged edition.

In spite of the pressing need for brevity, Westermann includes several useful discussions on the relationship between Genesis and the rest of the Bible. A number of helpful comments are made on OT and NT passages on which Genesis has a bearing.

A clear explanation is given of Westermann's view of the composition of Genesis. He stands in the mainstream of Biblical scholarship and, for the most part, his approach is diachronic and analytic emphasizing the history of the development of the text but offering little comment on the value or purpose of Genesis as a literary unit. However, he does not follow slavishly the classical documentary hypothesis. For example, he attaches considerable importance to oral tradition and differs from the usual documentary analysis of the patriarchal narratives. Most significantly, he rejects the idea that the "Elohists" document is found in Genesis 12-36.

The earlier theory that an independent "E" document could be found in the patriarchal history alongside the "J" and "P" documents has turned out to be very dubious (90).

The question of the historicity of the Patriarchal narratives is dealt with briefly but enough is said to give the reader a clear summary of Westermann's position. He concludes that, "study of the world of the patriarchs has demonstrated the possibility that they



could have lived and journeyed in the period before the Exodus and the settlement of the tribes in Canaan" (92). This should not be taken to mean that all the patriarchal narratives are regarded as historical. For example, he considers that the figure of Abraham portrayed in chapter 14 has "hardly anything in common with the Abraham of the ancient narratives" (116). Likewise the faith of Abraham expressed in chapter 15 is in "the language and thought of a later period" (119). Similar comments are made about God's speech to Abimelech in chapter 20 (149), the sacrifice of Isaac in chapter 22 (160) and the blessing narrative in chapter 27 (192).

Clearly, this is not a book with a high devotional or practical outlook. Those who turn to it seeking the implications of Genesis for a pastoral or counselling context will be disappointed. However, it is valuable as a concise introduction to the work of Westermann on Genesis. It will be useful to the reader who wants to acquire an overview of Westermann's approach and conclusions.

James McKeown.

Obadiah, Jonah and Micah, by David W. Baker, T. Desmond Alexander, Bruce K. Waltke. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Inter-Varsity Press, 1988. Pp. 207 5.50.

This volume comprises three individual commentaries by separate authors. The commentary on Obadiah has been contributed by David W. Baker. In his Introduction he uses four headings: (i) Edom in Space and Time; (ii) Obadiah: the Man and his Time; (iii) the Book; (iv) the Message. He suggests a dating for the book shortly after 587 BC and presents a compelling argument for its unity, based on the presence of "lexical and theological indicators" (p.25) in its two sections. He ends the Introduction with a short section in which he attempts to apply the message of the book of Obadiah to the reader of today.

One criticism which could be made is that the argumentation is rather brief in places. Yet this is only to be expected in a commentary on a book as short as Obadiah appearing in a volume of this format.

In the next section, Alexander takes a very comprehensive look at the book of Jonah. His Introduction spans some 45 pages and here he discusses the issues of (i) Authorship and Date; (ii) Unity of Composition; (iii) Genre; (iv) Purpose; (v) the Sign of Jonah; and (vi) the Text. He also provides additional notes on eight-century Assyria (together with maps) and on the structure of Jonah 1:4-16.

One is impressed by the large number of footnotes, citing sources and directing the reader to more detailed treatments of the subjects under discussion. Thus although the arguments in the main text are simplified at times, a detailed directory of the state of research in this area is provided (for example, p.52 n.2).

In line with the rest of this series, his general approach is conservative. For example, he argues for a pre-exilic dating of Jonah. However, it is typical of the work that this conclusion is reached via a thorough survey of all the relevant arguments.

In the section on Micah, Bruce K. Waltke divides his Introduction into four sections: (i) the Prophet; (ii) Historical Background; (iii) Form and Structure; (iv) Date and Authorship. This is followed by the Analysis, Commentary and an additional note on the dating of Micah 4:1-5.

Waltke lays more stress on the application of the work to today than do either Baker or Alexander (for example, see his comment "The church today needs men like Micah ..." p.139). However this does not undermine the scholarly approach which he has taken to the book, for he goes on to provide a thorough analysis of all shades of opinion on Micah.



With regard to date and authorship, he concludes that the book is a unity, written by Micah himself, in Judah, at the time of the Assyrian invasions. He also sees Isaiah of Jerusalem as having quoted Micah in Isa. 2:2-4.

In accordance with the aim of the series, the three commentaries in this volume will prove useful both to the layman and the student. They succeed in being clear enough to appeal to the general reader and yet scholarly in their approach. The student will find them most useful as guides and starting-points from which to explore the books of Obadiah, Jonah and Micah, as well as valuable sources of arguments and ideas.

Gilian Keys.

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